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SOUTH INDIA PHILATELISTS' ASSOCIATION

(FOUNDED 1956)
(AFFLIATED TO THE PHILATELIC CONGRESS OF INDIA)

POINTS TO PONDER

S.P. Chatterjea.

A question has been raised about the undesirable issues. Very often philatelists are advised not to include them in their collections for competitive exhibitions. They are not only ignored in the exhibitons, but affect the merit of the exhibits. But what are these underirable issues? Have they been defined properly, identified, and enumerated in lists? Are the members of the jury unanimous in their reactions to such items in the exhibits? All these and more questions on the issue are very pertinent to the exhibitors, particularly when so many regulations and special regulations have been evolved by the FIP to evaluate the exhibites in a scientific, systematic, and uniform manner. In all fairness, the collectors should be clearly told what not to exhibit in their collections. This requires a serious thinking by all concerned.

Postage stamps and other postal stationeries are issued solely for prepayemnt of postage. When the hobby of stamp collecting became popular and thousands and thousands of people adopted this hooby irrespective of age, caste, or creed, the Postal Administrations took full advantage of the situation by issuing all sorts of postage stamps which are not out of postal necessities but mainly for the purpose of raising more and more revenue at the cost of philatelists. They started issuing perforated and imperforated stamps; the same series of souvenir sheets of the same face value; issues in various colours for the same stamp or the same souvenir sheet; reprints of an issue or a art thereof in the same or slightly differing form; excessively long commemorative series; excessively high face value; miniature sheets; issues with themes foreign to the country of issue; issues in abnormally small quantities; issues with high surcharges. All these and many other gimmicks, like stamps of different shapes and sizes, stamps on silk, aluminium, wood, steel foil, plastics, leather, and gold and silver foils and being brought out only for financial purposes. In many samall countries, philatelic sales constitute one of the major items of their revenue. Once they got the taste of money by exploiting philatelists, it would be very difficult to stop them from bringing out these unethical issues. This can only be stopped by boycotting the purchase of such stamps. The FIP (Federation Internationale de Philatelie), from the very day of its existence (18th June 1926) started combating with all its means these unnecessary and harmful stamp issues. It is very unfortunate that, although the FIP has been very successful in many many burning problems in streamlining the activities of philately, it could not make much progress throughout these sixty years of its struggle on this issue. The FIP always deplored such issues and decided to ban them in the exhibitions patronised by FIP. It prepared lists of such issues to criculate them to the national federations, appealed to the Postal Administrations on several occasions for stopping such issues.

An attempt has been made in the next issue to indicate the various steps taken by the FIP from time to time to eradicate the issues harmful to philately. The readers might find this interesting and may like to inform their own considered views on the subject. The FIP has now prescribed the general criteria for evaluating competitive exhibits and FIP exhibitions on the basis of Treatment & Importance of the exhibit, Knowledge and Research imparted, Condition and Rarity of material, and Presentation of the exhibit. As per present principles enunciated for exhibit composition, an exhibit shall consist solely of appropriate philatelic material. Do not these so called undesirable issues also fall under appropriate philatelic items? The question, therefore, arises as to whether there are any such undersirable issues which should not be included to avoid devaluing the exhibit?

The FIP will do well to have this clarified once for all to remove the confusion existing in the minds of philatelists and even the jury members.

SIGNET- OCT - DECEMBER 1993
UNRECORDED 3 PIES STAMP OF BAMRA

BY SAHADEVA SAHOO

Basudev Sudhal Dev, the Raja and Ruling Chief of Bamra, a native Feudatory State of the British India, now two subdivisions (viz. Deogarh and Kuchinda) of the district of Sambalpur, intrduced the British pattern of administration in his state in 1880, following two spells of all-India tour. Ostensibly on pilgrimage, the Raja was strongly impressed by developments he saw during his travels throughout India. Postal facilities were the first items on his agenda of reforms. He had realised how important they were to him during his travel outside the State. He could not have otherwise kept contact with his Darbar (royal court) at Deogarh. The Raja of Bamra had already set up a post office at Deogarh. Following the First War of Independence of 1857 (popularly known as the Sepoy Mutiny) the British Government had restored the foot-line, badly destroyed by the local mutineers, between Nagpur and Calcutta, which ran through Raipur, Sambalpur, via Bamra state, to Mudnapore. The Raja of Bamra had been assigned the responsibility of ensuring smooth passage of Imperial Dak and maintaining Dak Chowkies all along the route, which was almost along the present alignment of the National Highway no.6. The Raja of Bamra established a post office at Deogarh to take advantage of the Imperial Dak Service through Sambalpur post office. Though the Raja set up a post office, stamps were not issued. He had of course issued "formula" stamppapers to take care of all denominations of court fee payments. To encourage people to make use of the State's postal service, the Raja prescribed a set of Rules for postage' on 1.6.1886, providing a concession of half the British postage rates for all types of postal services within his state's limits.

But the people of Bamra were not ready for a postal service of the British type. Few were mobile enought to need communicating home, none were literate enough to write a missive, and post office was confined to the capital. When the Raja was asked to pay required dues to have British post offices in his state, he refused. The Raja had organised his land-revenue system which required introduction of stamps for prepayment of court fees. He had set up a press at Deogarh and had begun printing state papers of other native states, e.g., Raigarh and Sarangagarh ny 1886. Obviously the Raja had established a good press by 1886, contrary to the belief held in many circles that Jagannath Ballabh press was established in 1886 only. "Masul" is the Oriya word which conveys the meaning of fees payable to the state. The Raja printed "masul" stamps in 1888. The philatelists call it the first series of postage stamps of Bamra People were not inclined to use the stamps even for court payments because it required earlier purchase and storing before use. It was difficult to makje a envelope. People saw the ample advantage of using British envelopes and cards. So the first series of stamps remained in the statutues of "prepared for use" and not used

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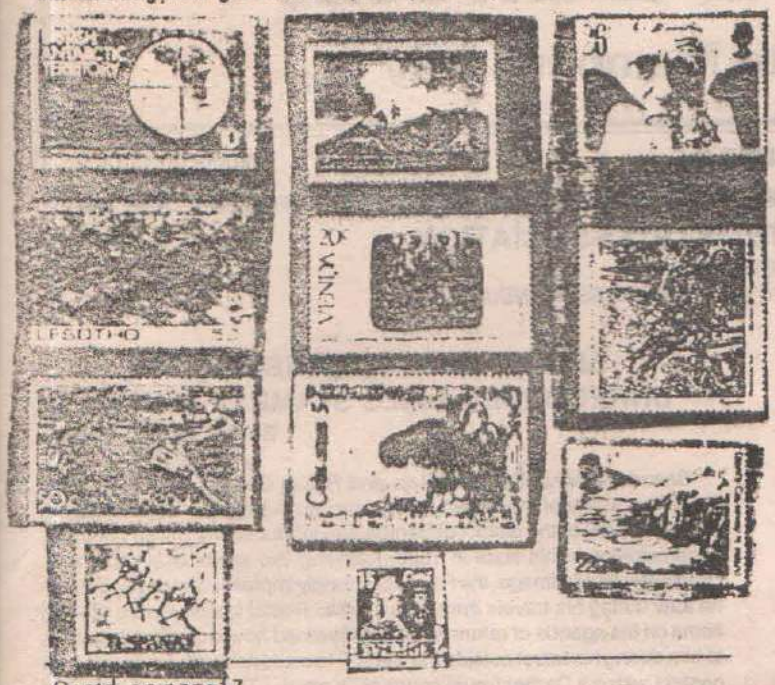
SIPA MEETINGS

Second sunday of every month - Regular meeting at the Philatelic Bureau, Anna Road Post Office, Madras - 600 002 (10.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.)first and third sunday of every month - Auction meeting at our Library Hall at 6 Nannian Street, Madras - 3 (Timing 10.45 a.m. to 1 p.m.
SIPA Library Open Tuesday & Sunday, 6 Nannian Street, Madras 3. (7 p.m. to 8 p.m.)

THEMATICS
EVOLUTION

Stamp collecting is fun, and a thematic collection should be enjoyed. Any item included is chosen to give you pleasure. It is only in competitive entries that certain rules must apply, and the following observations are intended as general guidelines. Any stamp listed by Gibbons in the appendix



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even for civil courts. The interest shown in the Bamra stamps by foreigners promoted the Raja to go in for a second series of stamps with the intention of putting them to real postal use. The second series was printed in 1890. while sale to stamp collectors went up, there was no perceptible use of these stamps in his post offices which he gradually increased to seven branches, housed at all police outposts which served as centres of adjudication of civil disputes. The Raja issued special court fee sstamps with his portrait early in 1893. By an order of 25.9.1893 he withdrew all anna-and rupee- value postage stamps from courts, and allowed one pice and two pice stamps for use both in postal and judicial services.

To know the genuineness of any stamp of Bamra, one has therefore to rely on court papers where these stamps have been used prior to September 1893. During such searches I have come across examples of 'quarter anna' stamps, not so far recorded in any catalogue. The Oriya equivalent of quarter anna is not only 'ek paisa' but also 'tini pahi' (three pies). The new variety reads 'tini pahi' or three pies, and is printed on orangish yellow paper which was used for one anna stamps. All the four examples I have, have been used on applications for settlement of land during September, 1893 and all are with capital P setting and 4 mm elephant- trunk and a gap between 'Fued' and 'tory' in the upper-most line of the cliche. The 4th stamp has the left vertical bar bent and two space-gaps in the word Feudatory, reading 'F' 'eud' 'atory', and elephant-trunk pointing to the right. one of the 4 examples has very wide margins all around, suggesting that some indents for quarter anna (3 pies) stamps, were executed so hurriedly that the composer had no time to stick to the standard plates of 16 cliches of 4 X4. It seems to be 2X2. The sheets were supplied to the police stations and outposts where people used to get court fees stamps. The 3 p stamps are seen used only in September 1893. It is reasonable to suppose that they have been printed inJuly or August 1893. The Raja had made wide publicity of his decision early in 1893 to create new villages within the forests of his State and invited applications for reclamation of land. The minimum fees prescribed for such an application was 4 annas and price of the stamp paper was 1 pice. If a person could not purchase a state paper he had to affix 1 pice stamp extra for authentication. Hence we find four and a quarter annas worth of stamps affixed on all such applications.

None of these stamps, as in case of other Bamra stamps, have been found used in postal transactions. Neither the India Study Circle's Bamra hand book by R.J. Benns nor any standard stamp catalogue records this 'tini pahi' stamps of Bamra

at the back of the catalogue should be avoided, as these are doubtful issues, and many are only labels produced with thematic collectors in mind. When faced with several stamps all vying for the one spot in the story, choose the one that fits in best visually and comes, if possible, from a country which has some connection with the subject. Erik the Red and his Vikings come better from Greenland 1982 than from Umm Al Qiwain 1974).

A postally-used cover and mint stamps can share the same page, although mint and used stamps as such are not usually mixed. Unless it is necessary to illustrate something like a printing technique by a block of stamps, a single stamp should be sufficient to make a point, for a block often implies a shortage of material.

Covers, postal stationery, meter marks, postmarks, stamp books etc can all enrich a collection, and this applies to most material issued legitimately by a postal administration. Maximum cards and miniature sheets take up a great deal of space, and warrant a place only if they add to the story. Postcards should offer more than an appropriate picture; but the same cards posted at an exhibition, perhaps with a special handstamp, adds considerable philatelic interest.

A theme of absorbing interest is the wide one of "Evolution" which can combine a whole range of sections, or concentrate on one particular aspect. For the geological evolution of the world itself British Antarctic Territory illustrated (1982) ancient Gondwanaland and its breakup by continental drift over millions of years into the 20th century Alfred Wegner (Austria 80) offered this theory of Continent Drift which has now been universally accepted. In ocean depths floating continental 'plates' continually move against each other in areas of great volcanic instability, and sea-floor spreading builds up ridges on which lie islands, the visible tops of mountain ranges. The Mid-Atlantic Ridge appeared in stamps commemorating the Royal Geographical Society (Ascension & Tristan 1980). Tristan (1982) illustrated the technical formation of volcanic cones and the build-up to an eruption, and Ascension (1978) produced a strip and booklet showing a panorama of volcanoes on this youthful island. Iceland to the north offers a variety of eruptions, and the South Sandwich Islands (FID 984) on the foot of the same ridge, depict some forbidding volcanoes in sub-Antarctica. Volcanic landscapes show the earth's crust in the very process of formation, and the actual eruption can be so violent that, like Krakatoa in 1883 (Indonesia 1984), the entire mountain itself is blown to infinity. Types of rock and mineral content can be grouped such as the ancient granites of the Scottish Cairngorms (GB 1966) and English Lakes (GB 1970 Grasmere), and the younger Tertiary basalts forming the solidified 'steps' of the Giants Causeway (GB 1981).

It was the study of rock strata and the fossils entombed within them that in the 18th and 19th centuries led to the clash between new scientific thoughts and conventional religious beliefs, the scientists holding many different views. Carl Linnaeus (Sweden 1978) who classified plants and animals into groups according to their similarities, held the orthodox view that the world was 6,000 years old according to Biblical intrepretation, and that all species remained unchanged in the form in which they were created. The French natuaralist Georges Buffon (1949) suggested that earth was far older than imagined. Alexander von Humboldt (Germany DDR 1969), Georges Cuvier (France 1969) and others investigating rock layers, proved that each strata could be dated according to its fossil content. Cuvier found there were no modern equivalents of the extinct marine trilobite and flying pterodactyl (DDR 1973), and since then fossil plants, trees (USA 1974), and even footprints (Lesoth 1984) and bones (Zambia 1973) of the huge dinosaurs clearly pointed to a process of evolution. Sir Charles Lyell claimed that all things fell into perspective if enough geological time was added, so that rock could form from sediments eroded and deposited in the normal cycle of decay and reconstruction over a period of immense time. A complete section can be devoted to Charles Darwin and his deliberations over 20 years that culminated in his Origin of Species, and his theory of survival of the fittest by means of natural selection. Britain marked his death centenary in 1982 by issuing a set showing a ruminative old man and the giant reptiles peculiar to the Galapagos Islands. where the beaks of finches. descended from a common stock, have changed physically to adapt to different environments. There were many interesting handstamps and stamps from other countries. The evolution of Man followed logically, and the Descent of Man suggested that man and apes shared a common ancestry, a theory that really upset established thoughts.

Earth is about 4,500 million years old, and life probably began during the past 570 million years, of which only the last 3 million spans the age of Man. This section of evolution is so enormous that it can be treated completely separately as a theme in its own right. Many new discoveries have been made recently which are still being evaluated. Excavations in Olduvai Gorge (Tanzania 1965) and Lake Turkana produced two distinct groups of hominids who were contemporaries roughly 3,000,000 years ago, the small-brained Australopithecine or 'Nutcracker Man' (Kenya 1982), and the short maker of primitive ancestor (Cuba 1967). Astonishing by 500,000 BC his

descendant the large-brained and taller Homo erectus (Kenya 1982) had spread across a vast area so that fossils of his type and his tools are known from China to Germany and in North and East Africa. A fine hunter, he controlled fire and produced the first standardised tool, the all-purpose handaxe. The short, hardy Neanderthal, thick-skulled and low-browed (Cuba 1967) was dominant before the last Ice Age, and his implements and food placed by the dead implies some sort of belief in life after death. They were supplanted by our own H.sapiens of 35,000 to 8,000 BC who carved ivory and bone handles for flint blades, and left a record of the animals and his hunting life in cave engravings. These gifted Cromagnons travelled westwards from the east Mediterranean, and the fantastic paintings of their descendants in the caves at Altamira (Spain 1967) and Lascaux (French art 1968) continue to delight us. After the Ice Age the rising sea-level isolated Britain (Jersey 1982), and here and in western Europe farming communities erected great megalithic standing stones (Guernsey 1977) or passage graves like Hougue Bie (Jersey 1969) or Newgrange (Ireland 1963), and later showed considerable knowledge of mathematics and astronomy in the creating of the unique Stone Henge. Meanwhile in Mesopotamia the wheel, pottery kilns and Sumerian pictographs were invented (Venda 1982), and written language was born. Each step in modern Man's progress can be minutely documented - the rise of great and ancient civilizations, the development of religion, the arts, the working of fine metals and advancing technology. From Stone Age to Space Age, Man's sojourn on earth is a mere blink of time.

BARBARA LAST

MOPHILA SALON (MODERN PHILATELY)

The decision of the F.I.P. 63rd Congress held at Seoul in August regarding 'Mophila Salon'

The F.I.P. Congress at Seoul decided to keep Mophila as an experimental Class in F.I.P. Exhibitions. The period covered was increased from the last 10 years to the last 15 years. The exhibits will be judged by a specialists jury and not by the visitors. Other old guidelines - only philatelic materials on 3 to 5 frames will continue to apply.

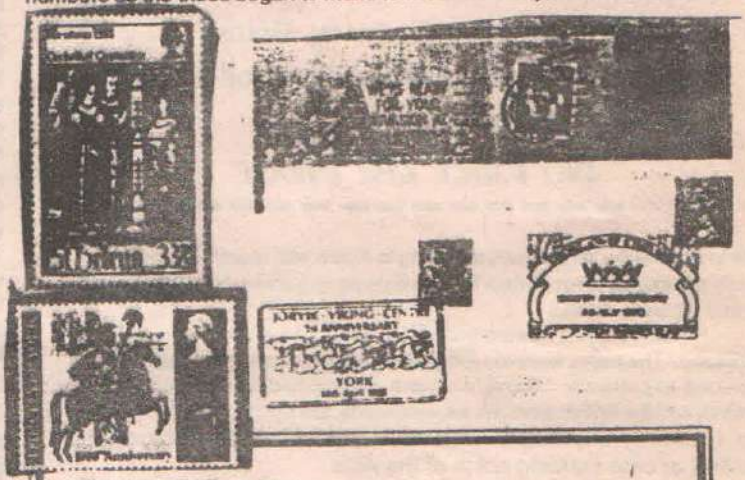
INVASION !

BARBARALAST

The Celts in Britain had given considerable assistance to their kinsmen in Gaul against the Romans, and Julius Caesar (Italy 1929) eventually determined to carry the war across the Channel. At midnight in late August 55B.C. he sailed with 6,000 men and 80 transports,"and with the morning light saw the white cliffs of Dover crowned with armed men".

The invasion fleet landed near Deal, and as the transports grounded, the islanders rode into the surf to attack with chariots and horse. Leaping into the sea, the legionnaires advanced into the shower of stones and javelins, and Caesar brought up his warships, and with catapults and arrows fired at the British flank. The native chiefs finally surrendered. But Caesar's supporting fleet of 18 cavalry transports was swept away, and his fleet damaged by the high tide of the full moon. Later the Romans withdrew to Gaul with prisoners and hostages.

Caesar returned the following year with five legions and 2,000 cavalry, overwhelming the natives with the sight of his great fleet of 800 ships. The tribes stopped their incessant squabbling and for a time banded together, and avoiding pitched battles, kept pace with the Romans on their march northwards. A mobile force harried the invaders by leaping out of their chariots to attack, and leaping back to retreat into the forests and marshes at speed. After crossing the Thames the defenders dwindled in numbers as the tribes began to make terms individually, and Caesar was



able to negotiate a settlement, returning to Rome with more hostages. For nearly a hundred years Britain had no occuppying power but sent a fixed annual tribute to Rome.

In 43A.D. a Roman invasion force of about 20,000 conquered the island. The tribes were too independent to unite, and subjugation was a painful experience. Garrisons were established at Colchester and Lincoln, and the British were driven westwards, still fighting a fierce guerilla war. London developed into a rich and busy trading centre with the largest basilica or civic building north of the Alps.

But the Romans made a grave error of judgment and flogged Boadicea, Queen of the Iceni, and ravished her daughters. Previously the Iceni had been one of the most co-operative of the tribes, but natives all rose to avenge the insult. Retribution was terrible. The 9th Legion from Lincoln was slaughtered without trace, and Boadicea swept through the main Roman centres, and razed Colchester. London and St.Albans. Tacitus claimed that in the three towns over 70,000 were massacred "by sword, cross, gibbet or fire", and a deep layer of ashes in City excavations bear witness to this tribal revenge. Suetonius, who had just destroyed the seat of British resistance on Anglesey, marched eastwards, and his men, heavily outnumbered, vanquished the tribes by superior discipline and tactics. No quarter was given. The Romans garrisoned Chester and York, built Hadrian's Wall to keep out the Picts, erected the pharos at Dover, and for nearly 400 years protected a rich and peaceful Britain. A Roman Centurion (GB SG888) marked York's 1900th anniversary in 1971. Constantine the Great was born in York in 274A.D., and was proclaimed emperor there by the legions in 306 A.D. A charming series of Christmas stamps from St.Helena, designed by Jennnifer Toombs, shows medieval glass from the windows of the parish church of Ashton-under-Lyne, recording Constantine's birth (St. Helena 1985 SG 453) with the ancient Britons and Romans dressed in 15th century garments!

As the power of Rome declined, so from about 367 A.D. did savage attacks increase from the Teutonic tribes, who made their way down the west coast of Europe, crossed the channel, and invaded the south and east coasts from Southampton to the Humber. Their open longboats crewed by 30-40, and powered only by the oars of 14 men, were ideal for nosing up the creeks and shallow waterways. These fierce Anglo-Saxons who originally came to pillage, stayed to farm. Theirs was no planned invasion, but rather a mass migration from about 441 A.D., with the invaders settling in loose communities bound by ties of blood and oaths of loyalty. This was the time of the great warrior, Arthur (GB 1985 SG 1294), who roughly 50 years. Little is known about this Romano-British leader, most of the romantic traditions attached to his name being medieval additions, but the Welsh Annals refer to his death in 539 A.D. and the "strife of Camlann, in which Arthur and Medraut (Mordred) perished, and there was a great plague in Britain and Ireland".

The Saxons overran the southern countries, and Cerdic's vessels took Southampton. Cerdic, Saxon chieftain and first king of Wessex, was the ancester of Alfred the Great, and the virtual founder of the British monarchy. The 1d coin of Cuthred (d.661) another descendant was featured on the 35p stamp book of 1973.

Saxons gave their name ot Essex, Sussex, Wessex and Middlesex _ the lands of the East, South, West and Middle Saxons. Our knowledge of this period comes from the Venerable Bede, and Anglo-Saxon Chronicles. Dynastic rivalry was intense between the tribal confederations of the 7th and 8th centuries, but gradually their people became converted ot Christianity, and several Saxon kings were crowned on the Coronation Stone still to be seen at kingston-upon-Thames.

The advent of their distant kinsmen, the Viking pagans from Norway and Denmark, was calamitous. Their dragon-prowed longboats with striped sails swept in form the north, slaying, ravishing, plundering. Seizing horses they rode inland, spreading terror by fire and sword, and carrying off young men and women as slaves. the great centres of culture and learning in the abbeys and monasteries were obliterated. Wessex alone remained, hopelessly outnumbered, as the last Christian kingdom of England. By paying protection money in the form of danegeld Alfred bought time to organise resistance, while the Danes haggled and divided their hand into status Roughly equivalent to the present day counties of East Anglia and the Midlands. Alfred founded the first English fleet by building war-galleys larger than the Viking ships and defeating the Norsemen at sea before they could land. Gradually Alfred's half-Welsh, half-Saxon people became victorious, and Alfred, knowing he could not stem the Norse invasion indefinitely, in his great wisdom offered peace. The Danes returned to their homes, the Saxons ruling in the south, and Danelaw operating in the north, although the coasts continued to be harried by raiding bands.

Alfred, with his capital at Winchester, was inspired with the great vision of a united Christian England with the centres of civilisation and learning restored. It did not come about in his time, but he laid the foundations. His great-grandson Edgar was the first acknowleged king of all England, and parts of his Coronation service at Bath 973 A.D. are still used today. King Edgar visited Chester the following year, and was rowed on the River Dee by eight lesser kings (IOM 1974 SG 51). He commanded

Magnus Haraldson of the Isles, the descendant of Vikings who had seized Man in 938 A.D., to rid the seas of marauding Norsemen. Magnus had a fleet of about 3,600, and a fight between his men and a Norse fleet is seen on IOM SG52.

Edgar's son, Ethelred II the Unready, fled ignominiously from the Danes, and King Canute of Denmark took the throne, becoming by right of conquest king of England, Norway and Sweden, ruling justly after Alfred's example. Unfortunately he died in 1035, and eventually the English royal house was restored seven years later in the person of Ethelred's son, Edward the Confessor (Guernsey 1969 SG13). A pious incompetent , he was totally absorbed in devout works and the building of his abbey church at West Minister (GB 1966 SG 687). He nominated William his cousin and Duke of Normandy, as his successor, but upon his deathbed in January 1066 switched to his brother-in-law Harold, who was duly elected by the Witan (Parliament), although he had previously, under constraint, forsworn the English throne and promised to uphold William's claim.

Harald Haardraada, king of Norway (SG 1950 SG408), was another contender for the crown, wishing to incorporate Britain into his Scandinavian empire. In September Haardraada's fleet landed near the great Viking centre at York. Harold, waiting for William in the south, marched his men at speed up the old Roman road, and after covering the last 30 miles from daybreak on 25 September, his warriors fell upon the Vikings at Stamford Bridge, where Haardraada perished.

William's invasion fleet, depicted on Gordon Drummond's Europa 1982 (Guernsey SG254) design, had been waiting for a favourable wind. His ship Mora (Poland 1963 SG1374), surpassing all others in speed and size, had been given to him by Matilda, his wife, and flew the standard of St.George (still flown by the Navy today) which had been presented to him by the Pope. A transport "packed from bow to stern with men and horses" is shown on GB SG711. The news of William's landing was immediately galloped north to York, and Harold's army marched grimly south to repel this new invasion. His own house-carls were the finest infantry in Europe, but they were worn by the forced marches, and most of his army were peasants, no match for William's mounted warriors. At dusk on 14 October 1066 on Senlac Hill near Hastings Harold fell, surrounded by his slain. A Norman wrote, "In the English ranks the only movement was the dropping of the dead ... those sons of the old Saxon race, the most dauntless of men".

The Bayeux Tapestry, stitched for Queen Matilda, illustrates the Norman invasion and conquest of England. Scenes from it were chosen for Britain's 900th anniversary of the Battle of Hastings, and there are many postmarks based upon it. William vowed to build an abbey should victory be his. Battle Abbey was duly constructed and is used as the Motif for Battle philatelic handstamp. Jennifer Toombs pictured Harold and William with a Saxon churl drawing their attention to Halley's Comet which appeared at that time, and was incorporated into the tapestry (Jersey 1986). France's offering (SG 1722) showed William and his birthplace Falaise Castle, together with his landing at Pevensey.

William I was crowned in the new Westminister Abbey (GB SG687), and set about a massive programme of rebuilding castles and churches. His keep and palace, the White Tower of the Tower of London, was built in 1078 (SG1054) within the Romanfort and city walls. His castle at Windsor guarded the upper reaches of the Thames. As a King he was devout, clear-sighted, and an able but ruthless administrator. He commissioned the Domesday Survey to facilitate taxation throughout the land, and introduced Norman feudalism, all men being first and foremost the King's men. His barons were compelled to pay homage and taxes, and provide a fixed number of mounted, armoured knights to support the Crown. The barons in turn protected their tenants, and farmed out their lands in a similar fashion to vassal knights. The new GB stamps illustrate four different classes of serf, freeman, knight and baron in contemporary style, although they are the artist's own interpretation. William grafted a framework of feudal rights on to the old Saxon and Danish customs which he left more or less unchanged. Norman remains up and down the country bear witness to the last great invasion of England, and the beginning of the welding together of William's polyglot subjects into one nation - the English.

QUOTABLE QUOTES

People generally quarrel since they cannot argue.

- G.K. Chesterton

You're never a loser until you quit trying.

- Mike Ditka

Pride is listless, colourless, odourless, and sizelss.
Yet, it is the hardest thing to swallow.

- August Black

PHILATELIC TERMS EXPLAINED

EDITOR, SIPA

"Sleepers"

Among the very few references in philatelic literature to the word "sleeper", there is the succinct definition in Sutton's The Stamp Collector's Encyclopaedia. It reads: "An unsuspected elusive stamp".

When a dealer or auctioneer is handling a large accumulation of stamps and covers, or an extensive general collection, it is virtually impossible - and, generally, a waste of time - to scrutinise each stamp individually so that it is only the obviously important and more highly priced stamps that are picked out. However, among the run-of-the mill material there may well be a much rarer stamp which belies its appearance and was a "sleeper", unsuspected by the previous owner.

A sleeper is most often found from looking at the back of the stamp for it is an unchecked watermark which tends to provide the distinction between the sleeper and a more common counterpart with an identical face.

The Great British 1865 6d lilac provides a good example. The normal watermark is a rose in each upper corner of the stamp and a thistle and shamrock, respectively, in the lower corners. The printings from plates 5 and 6 have one had been damaged or lost during the print run and a rose "bit" was wired in error to the dandy roll in replacement. The normal stamp is catalogued at £35 and the error at £300 (both used. How many general collectors would spot the difference on a casual inspection?

The 1912 1d of Great Britain is priced at 25p mint. There are three minor, but distinct, printing flaws in which the "O" of "ONE" looks like a "Q", the price tag starting at £ 200. Sometimes, it is a small perforation difference as with the Great Britain 1911 1/2d green, normally perf. 15x14 but known with perf. 14. The price difference makes it worth looking out for: mint £1.75 and £3,250 (perf.14); used 60p and £ 200 (perf.14). Shades play their part, as with the 1912 1/2d Cyprus green from a 1914 printing catalogued at £ 2.250 and the 2 1/2d Prussian blue of the same issue.

These examples from Great Britain may be considered extreme but there are many other sleepers from all parts of the wrold as careful study of the Gibbons (or other) catalogues shows. It is up to each collector to be alert and not be caught napping by a sleeper!

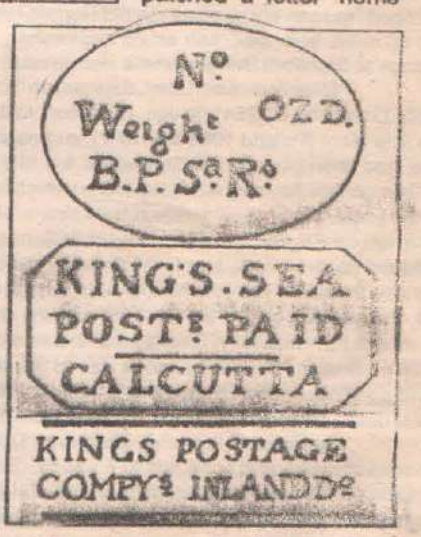
Another class of sleeper is rather different. Philatelic journalists writing about the stamp market tend to use the word sleeper when referring to a perfectly normal stamp which, in their judgment, is in strong demand and short supply and, therefore, likely to rise quickly in value. This is rather in the nature of a guessing game since manipulation of stocks may be causing a temporary shortage. Only time will prove or disprove the genuine scarcity of the stamps involved.

MAILS TO AND FROM INDIA

D. HAMMOND GILES

The story of the India-U.K. mails from the 17th century until the mid-19th century, when the P&O Line became reponsible for the carriage of all sea mails between the two countries, is a fascinating one.

Imagine the thoughts of the early writers who had gone to INDIA to serve the East India Company, knowing when they despatched a letter "home" that it would take nine months to a year, perhaps, to reach Britain, and some two years before a reply could be received! Perhaps even it might never reach its destination, but be lost with the carrying ship on the long and hazardous sea journey. Such were the frequency of these disasters that the writers would invariably send a duplicate letter by another ship in the hope that one at least would arrive. In those days all correspondence had to be hand written and then labourisly copied out, for there were no typewriters or carbon paper at that period.



During the 16th and 17th centuries, letters were conveyed between the two countries by private arrnagements, ususally through the ship's master or a travelling friend. By the Post Office Act of 1660 letters brought into Britain by merchant ships were made 'subject to Inland Postage' but as the ships' masters received no payment for not handing them over, few letters were handed to the Post Office, and naturally, no Post Office markings are found on such letters.

In order to capture more of the incoming mail the Post Office, at the beginning of the 18th century, began to offer voluntarily to pay a gratuity of one penny for every letter handed over at the port of arrival. This gratuity became legal under the Act of 1711, when letters became subject to two rates, the ship's captain's fee and the inland postage, and the combined rate was usually shown in manuscript, sometimes preceded by the words 'In all'.

British Ship Letter Receipt Stamps

It was not until 1766 that ship letter handstamps were first used on the incoming mail, when following the Act of 1765, there was a general issue of port (named) stamps, such as the 'London/Ship Lre' stamp.

This mark was used on letters emanating from all parts of the world during 1766-91, but the majority were on letters from India, with which the greatest maritime commerce was then carried on and London was the home port of most of the ships of the Hon. East India Company. Similar stamps were used at other ports from 1798 the design of this handstamp was changed from time to time for all ports in Britain.

British Ship Letter Despatch Stamps

Before the 18th century outgoing letters to India were also privately arranged with the masters of the ships sailing from British ports. The Act of 1711 then made the despatch of letters by private ship illegal if they could be sent by the Post Office regular packets but there was then no packet service to India. By the Act of 1799 the Post Office was authorised to despatch letters by vessels that were not regular packets but the Hon. E.I.C. refused to co-operate with the Post Office or order their captains to carry such mail. The only means, therefore, of sending letters to India was in the 'care of the captain' of one of the E.I.C.'s ships or 'by favour' of a passenger or member of the ship's crew. Thus, no British ship letter handstamps are found on letters despatched to India before 1815.

At last, in 1815, the British Post Office arrived at a compromise with the Hon. E.I.C. and took over the India-U.K. mails, subject to certain concessions to the Company, and under the Act of 1815 monthly packets were established albeit at a high rate of postage, though letters sent by 'private ship' incurred a lower rate. For the first time as a result of this Act letters despatched to India were stamped with London handstruck marks, to distinguish 'packet' letters from 'ship' letters.

No effort was made to improve the service by providing a new fleet of fast packet ships and the service proved to be no quicker than the former private ships. This, together with the heavy 'packet' postage rates, became subject to severe complaint from the public. The Act of 1815 was therefore repealed in1819 by an act which allowed the despatch of letters to the East Indies by means other than the Post Office. Letters sent through the Post Office were stamped to indicate that the postage had been prepaid but letters sent through other channels i.e. by private ship, were not stamped at all in Britain.

Early Indian Handstruck Stamps

Most letters between Britain and India arrived at, or despatched thorough, the main Presidency Ports of Madras, Calcutta and Bombay and the earliest reference to ship letter postage being liable to levy in India appears in the Warren Hastings Post Office reforms of 1774 under which letters coming from seaward were liable to half postage which was paid on delivery. No Indian ship letter receipt stamps, however, have been seen before 1807.

The earliest reference to postage on letters sent to Europe is in the Bombay 'Courier' of 1793 and also in the contents of a private letter written from Madras in 1794 where the rates were quoted _ and very heavy they were too. No trace of any postage rates on letters sent seaward from Calcutta have been found before 1798 but three covers from Calcutta, all dated 1794, have been recorded with the earliest Indian ship letter despatch stamp as illustrated.

A great variety of Indian ship letter stamps were used from 1799 and those of particular interest are the stamps used during the short life of the English Ship Letter Act of 1815, more commonly known as 'King's Post' marks, some of the stamps incorporating the words 'King's Postage' in their make-up.

Cape Route

All letters so far referred to were conveyed by the long and tedious, not to say, dangerous route via the Cape, and most were carried, after the repeal of the 1815 Act, by the ships of the Hon. E.I.C. on behalf of the Post Office, but were subject to certain concessions when compared with rates charged on letters to Britain from elsewhere in the world other than the East Indies.

The fact, however, remained that the letters were all involved in a very long transit time, because the same slow old-fashioned square-rigged East Indiamen continued to be used still taking up to nine months or more per voyage. From 1813 the East Indis Company lost its monopoly of trade with the East Indies and trade through other channels increased steadily, demanding a quicker service.

With the introduction of vessels propelled by steam, and the crossing of the Atlantic by steamship in 1819, thoughts turned to the use of steamers to carry mails to and from India. In 1825, the Enterprize 479 tons, under Captain Johnson, journeyed by the Cape to Calcutta taking 113 days proving that it was possible. But the time taken for the journey was disappointing.

Thoughts then turned from the Cape route by steamer to a shorter alternative way that had occasionally been used in the past, namely the overland route, either via the Persian Gulf and across overland from Suez to Alexandria and then via the Mediterranean to Britain.